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AROUND PARIS WITH THE INNOCENTS

KATHARINE ELISE CHAPMAN

As soon as you go to Paris, you begin to learn things. The discoveries which you make are not always put down in the guidebooks, but they are interesting. Among other matters, you view with wonder the seeming naïveté of the Frenchman in his affairs of locomotion: your railway ticket is demanded only *after* you have taken your ride; on the Underground you receive one which is never collected, and which you are blandly requested to put into a receptacle for litter; or you get your pocket-book filled with 'bus checks, which you keep awhile with the vague expectation that the inexorable law of France may some time demand them of you. All this has the zest of a new experience, although you may somewhat change your views when you become wiser.

You scale daily the steep height of the tramway, because in the attic you can best see the town, and see it at half-price; or you are tossed about on the upper floor of the two-storied 'buses. You are packed in with the crowd on the Underground, while you devoutly hope that the home-folks will never discover your crime in being a free-born American and traveling second class. You are hustled and jolted and bounced in a quiet and orderly Parisian way, but you enjoy every minute of it. You are seeing Paris. You are an Innocent, but you are learning. It is a most appetizing way of acquiring the French language, and it is a part of the course offered to the Chicago University Innocents.

The two strongest points in the instruction by Parisian teachers of the French language are the excursions and the lectures. As instruction in the tongue with them includes everything essentially French, their method gives opportunity for object-lessons on every hand. A merely tabular account of the excursions would read with as much exhilaration as a table of contents, or the dictionary, of which someone remarked that

it was very informing, but the story wasn't good. For such information, see Baedeker.

M. Lesaunier, *professeur licencié ès lettres*, has for more than eight weeks been giving a delightful résumé of the times of Louis Quatorze, but the punctuation of these lectures has been the excursions. To visit Versailles and see the identical couch from which that Grand Monarch would rise to be robed in the full view of his awe-struck courtiers, makes the past very vivid, and gives one a nearer view of the character of the man. "No man is a hero to his valet," but somehow Louis Quatorze managed to remain a king, even if not a hero, in the sight of all his valets, which included his whole court.

To enter the crypt of Saint Denis, and stand face to face with the white marble slab behind which hides the poor remnant of that arrogant pride which was brought low by the armies of Blenheim, is almost to stand within the shadow, at least, of the living form. The centuries drop away like a robe of gauze. You see the great Louis and Madame Maintenon. You see that flowing hair which graced the monarch's shoulders, to be superseded later by the voluminous full-bottomed peruke—an ornament which must often have felt very warm about his neck and shoulders. You see him surrounded by his courtiers. You see Madame de Sevigné—"Ici est le tombeau de la reine, Marie Thérèse," drones the guide, and you shake off with a start the seventeenth-century wig which has somehow crept around your own shoulders.

As you pass through, the crypt of Saint Denis throbs with the great heart-beat of those past centuries. They can almost be heard when you stand before the great central vault where the poor marred body of Marie Antoinette found a final resting-place, after the Revolution had spent its wrath on the kings and queens entombed within. But Saint Denis is only one of the object-lessons which the student of French finds on every hand. There is the chateau of Vincennes, whose empty fosse and stern donjon tower now smile so peacefully in the sunshine. On its southern battlements the young trees are growing, and vines fall gracefully over the wall. Yet it has played its grim part in

French history from the time of Saint Louis until the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon in 1851. There is Fontainebleau and there is Barbazon; there are Versailles and the Great and Little Trianon, rich in pathetic memories; there are the Luxembourg, the Place Vendôme, the Place d'Étoile—to enter any one of which is to link the life of France today with the spirit of the past.

But this is not all. These lectures in French history are not merely records of kings and of wars. France gracefully turns another side to the world in filling her old, disused palaces with the productions of genius, as well as adding new structures to hold her wealth of art. Among these, one, of course, thinks first of the Louvre and the Panthéon, either of which might be made the mistress of one's life-devotion, and which it would be a mere impertinence to describe in a few inadequate sentences.

There is still another side. There are the churches and cathedrals of France, which, of all its constructions, are the most profound exposition of the life which has flowed and surged and throbbed along the years. To view from without the massive bulk of Notre Dame with its flying buttresses is to realize, as never before, that those mediaeval piles were the concrete embodiment of a prayer. The grotesque gargoyles do not look devotional, it is true; but they are the fitting form for the blind and ignorant petitions of superstition. Some twentieth-century prayers may seem as distorted to angel vision. But the impression as a whole is a great uplift. Then stand within, where the transept, in crossing the nave, is bathed in the smile from the great rose windows, and you will surely know that the thought of the architecture was only to provide the means to an end. Those old builders *felt* the worship for which they built the shrine. And they built better than they knew; for the reverent calm and holy awe of this still place could not have failed to leave its impress, not only upon the generations of worshipers, but also upon the tide of sightseers which has since swept through the great nave.

One of the first things which the Innocent learns in going about Paris alone is the real good-nature and kind-heartedness of the people. This is not mere surface varnish. The politeness

for which they are famed is only the outward guise of the inner instinct. When a lady, on coming out of her own Catholic service on Sunday morning, goes a block out of her way to show you the Protestant chapel, and stands with voluble gestures until she sees you heading in the right direction, she has nothing to gain by it but a good conscience. The Parisian will reply to your blocked-up French in halting English, doing his best to make you understand, in the cheerful and ubiquitous "oui, madame," with the accent on the last syllable. Good-nature and kindness of heart may not be the loftiest virtues of humanity, but they are pleasant virtues with which to come in contact in a strange land. It is sometimes said that Johnny Crapaud has his business instincts and his eye to the main chance; but one meets the same condition everywhere in Europe. In fact, it is whispered that the United States is the only land where absolute disinterestedness reigns; where the pocket-book hath no charms, and the almighty dollar is only a figure of speech.

Such have the Innocents found Johnny Crapaud—and have liked him; shutting their unaccustomed eyes to the things which have looked to them decidedly "queer," and feeling that it is hardly possible to obtain an omniscient opinion of a great people in a few short weeks.

The art-life of France as shown in her literature could hardly find a better exponent than M. Debussy, who has been for a number of weeks working through the field of the modern French dramatists. In delicacy of touch and expression M. Debussy reflects so well the literature amid which he has lived that he is himself an artist in words. Both M. Debussy and M. Lesaunier are men of deep and broad cultivation, and speak such exquisite French that to meet each of them for four hours weekly is in itself a comprehensive study of the language. The same may be said of all the lecturers of the course.

M. Schrader, himself one of the eminent men of France, at the invitation of his long-time friend, Mme. Fauconnet, has most courteously contributed a few lectures upon ethnology in its relation to the physical features of the earth; illustrating them by such precision of gesture and such clearness of enunciation as

almost to give ears to the deaf, and understanding to the incapable. In his last lecture he dwelt upon the fact, already recognized by sociologists, that population, having touched the extreme west of the American continent, was bound to overflow in other directions. Following the line of the least resistance, and ever stretching westward, he said, population and commerce would at last reach the golden zone where West becomes East again, and, sweeping over, would rouse the ancient civilization of China from its long sleep by more perfect intercommunion with younger races.

M. Schneider, of the Paris Conservatory of Music, also courteously gave an evening in the salon as a compliment to the "jeunes Américaines." His subject was the development of the theme in modern music, with illustrations upon the piano. Curiously enough, nearly all of his interpretations were from German composers. Truly, there is no fatherland in music, but as it draws its inspiration from all peoples, so it unites all upon the common basis of its enchantment. Beginning with the first simple theme of a fugue by Bach, he moved down the line through Mozart and Beethoven to Chopin, weaving in and out, as he advanced, the intricate web of variations which have gathered around the theme. In concluding, he gracefully called the attention of the ladies to César Franck, asking them to carry back to America with them the recollection that France had now a composer who was destined to place her in the front rank of musical attainment.

It would not be possible to omit from the *Wanderjahr* story of the University Innocents a hint or two about the snug and quiet nest to which they flutter home after their journeyings. Any home in France must be an object of interest to an American; but the *pensionnat* of Mme. Fauconnet has attractions which are unique enough for even a news article. Ascending the stone steps from the garden all abloom, you enter an ample hallway, with a door at your right opening into Madame's office. Here you may see her at almost any hour in the day, busy among her papers, the competent woman of affairs; although after dinner in the evening she often appears as the graceful and cordial

hostess. Passing through another door to the right, you come upon the vestibule containing the staircase. Springing from the ground floor, a story lower down, it ascends in spirals, with its two branches leading off in other directions, so suggestive of something fascinatingly different—some hidden nook or charming corner. From other doors near the staircase you may look out upon the long school buildings with refectory and school-rooms and music-rooms; and above, the dormitories, with their seemingly endless succession of neat white beds, fitting snuggeries for youth and innocence. You may see the quadrangle formed by the buildings, making the school-yard. There in the middle stands a glorious old tree, and other trees hang over the graceful latticed fence which is the inner defense, so to speak, of this green-walled citadel. It would never do to let either prying eyes or desecrating feet roam in these sacred precincts where the daughters of France are kept like articles of Sèvres china. So we will turn our feet and our glances for a moment to the room where the Innocents spend their morning hours at the lectures. It is large and light, and the long French windows swing open inwardly and look foreign and enticing. Here the Innocents are seated, with the slightly furrowed brow of deep thought and attention, as the sentences flow out from the lips of the lecturer in sonorous accents. But the door opens, and Mlle. Ashléman enters, accompanied by Mme. Fauconnet, who greets with a warm pressure of the hand each member of the party. The Innocents have one and all agreed that they have been surprisingly fortunate in coming into close contact with this lady, who, although of a land so different from ours in its customs and traditions, displays such unusual breadth of mind and such genuine kindness of heart. Instead of censuring, she has been ever ready to sympathize, fully recognizing the individuality and yielding, when possible, to the wishes of each. One of the pleasantest recollections of this so fruitful summer in after-years will be the charming hospitality of this woman of France, who sets forth so beautifully the truth that womanliness need not be the exclusive possession of one nation, but is rather the blessed and universal gift to the race.